

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 SINGAP 03481 200953Z

21

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

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O 200917Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5794

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 3481

EXDIS

DEPT PASS TO DOD AND CINCPAC

MILITARY ADDRESSEES HANDLE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, SN, US

SUBJECT: WIRE SERVICE NEWS LEAK CONCERNING SINGAPORE REQUEST FOR F-5'S

REFS: A) SINGAPORE 3397; B) DAO SINGAPORE 130819Z JUL 76

1. WE WERE APPALLED TO PICK UP SINGAPORE AFTERNOON NEWS-PAPER (NEW NATION) JULY 20 AND READ UNDER HEADLINES "TIGER JETS FOR SINGAPORE" AND "THE POOR MAN'S SUPERSONIC" A REUTER'S WIRE STORY DATED WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, GIVING AN ALMOST EXACT ACCOUNT OF THE GOS REQUEST (REFTELS) TO PURCHASE F-5 AIRCRAFT. MILITARY EQUIPMENT PURCHASE DECISIONS IN SINGAPORE ARE CONSIDERED HIGHLY CONFIDENTIAL AND ACTUALLY CLASSIFIED SECRET BY GOS. SENSITIVITY IS PARTICULARLY HIGH IN THIS CASE. WHILE GOS IS FULLY AWARE THAT SUCH PURCHASES BECOME PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE AFTER FULL APPROVAL, IT WILL COMPLETELY FAIL TO UNDERSTAND A USG LEAK OF THIS INFORMATION TO THE PRESS EVEN BEFORE THE USG HAS RESPONDED TO THE GOS REQUEST.

2. PARTICULARLY ANNOYING TO US IS FACT THAT WASHINGTON NEWS STORY WHICH IS ATTRIBUTED TO USG SOURCES (AND INDEED ONLY SOMEONE IN USG COULD HAVE ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION),
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BECAME PUBLIC PRIOR TO ANY RESPONSE THROUGH OFFICIAL

CHANNELS ACKNOWLEDGING REFTELS.

3. STORY CONTAINS FURTHER QUOTATION ATTRIBUTED TO CURRENT CONGRESSIONAL PRESENTATION, AS FOLLOWS:
"CONTINUATION OF THIS RELATIONSHIP (MILITARY SALES) WILL MAINTAIN AND PRESERVE ACCESS BY THE UNITED STATES TO SINGAPORE'S EXCELLENT NAVAL AND AIR FACILITIES."
EMBASSY DOES NOT HOLD DOCUMENT TO WHICH QUOTATION ATTRIBUTED; HOWEVER, IT IS QUITE OBVIOUS THAT STATEMENTS OF THIS NATURE ARE HIGHLY SENSITIVE, AND NOT LIKELY TO PLEASE GOS. FOR PUBLIC CONSUMPTION, GOS TAKES POSITION THAT IT TREATS THE SUPER-POWERS EVENHANDEDLY, EVEN IF ITS FACILITIES HAVE BEEN MADE AVAILABLE TO THE US.

4. ARTICLE ALSO DESCRIBES OTHER CURRENT MILITARY PURCHASE REQUESTS BY GOS IN LESS ACCURATE BUT NEVERTHELESS FRANK MANNER, E.G. HELICOPTERS, C-130'S, APC'S AND HOWITZERS. CONSIDERING REGIONAL RESERVATIONS REGARDING US MILITARY PRESENCE AND ACTIVITIES, THIS STORY IS LIKELY TO CREATE SERIOUS EMBARRASSMENT FOR GOS AND ACCORDINGLY HAVE NEGATIVE IMPACT ON OUR CURRENT PLANS FOR MILITARY ACTIVITY IN SINGAPORE. FOR MONTHS WE HAVE BEEN TRYING TO PLACE US-GOS MILITARY RELATIONS BACK ON A BASIS OF MUTUAL TRUST AND COOPERATION, BUT THIS EPISODE MAY VERY WELL UNDO WHATEVER GOOD HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED.

5. REQUEST DEPARTMENT TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTION TO DRY UP ANY FURTHER LEAKS. I HAVE APPOINTMENT WITH FOREIGN MINISTER RAJARATNAM TOMORROW AND WILL EXTEND MY APOLOGIES, BUT WOULD APPRECIATE ANY WORDS OF EXPLANATION WHICH WASHINGTON MAY BE ABLE TO PROVIDE. WE WOULD ALSO APPRECIATE REPLY TO REFTELS.
HOLDRIDGE

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED ABOVE ADDRESSEES.

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